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Uncle Tomahawk

by Will Nicholls

It's unavoidable, if unpleasant, to address the case of Senator Patrick Brazeau. I have often questioned his credentials as a credible Native leader in the pages of *The Nation*. For instance, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP), which Brazeau led before being appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, claims to advocate for all off-reserve Natives, is not elected by the people it purports to represent. The Corbiere court case and ruling forced First Nations communities to allow off-reserve members to vote in local elections and publicize the times and ways they could do so. Unfortunately, this legal judgment and democratic philosophy does not appear to apply to a national organization that receives millions in federal subsidies.

I have tried to interest my non-Aboriginal friends in the CAP model so they could create an organization to represent non-Natives who live on reserves. They wouldn't be allowed a choice of who would represent them, of course. Not surprisingly, my non-Native friends weren't interested. Nonetheless, Prime Minister Harper expressed his view of democratic legitimacy by claiming, "When Mr. Brazeau was appointed to the Senate he was the national chief of one of the country's largest and most respected Aboriginal organizations."

Sidestepping fundamental foundations of democracy, CAP has no individual members, offers no services or programs other than research and lobbying yet receives over $6 million a year from the federal government and toes the government line. While Brazeau was the "national chief", CAP claimed to represent over 800,000 off-reserve Aboriginals through affiliates. I am still unsure exactly who or what these affiliates mean in terms of representation.

Yet CAP and Brazeau loudly and proudly expressed partisan support for the Conservative Party. After the 2006 federal election that put the Conservatives in power, the rewards were many. Brazeau profitably parroted party propaganda in his highly visible role as Canada's new "Uncle Tomahawk," leading to his appointment as Canada's youngest senator. As senator, he continued to squawk the talk written for him by his Conservative handlers. In doing so, Brazeau harmed many First Nations bands, organizations, movements and peoples. Gilbert Whiteduck, Chief of Kitigan Zibi First Nation, of which Brazeau is officially a member, didn't mince words when he observed that Brazeau was exploiting his background as a pretext to attack Natives and their organizations, issues and actions.

Now Brazeau has to pay the piper for selling out and shilling for those who had no respect for him in the first place. His political friends dropped him like the hot potato when he was charged with sexual and domestic assault. They were aware of potential problems beforehand but Brazeau was willing to be their puppet so they were ignored it until the media frenzy.

I wish I could say I was sorry for Brazeau, but I am not. He made his lifestyle and political choices and now he has to pay the price. I am sorry for his alleged victim(s) – there are previous allegations – and regret the arrogance he displayed in thinking he could get away with his reprehensible actions.

In the end, Brazeau has given Canadians one important gift: he has galvanized public attention on the way our Senate operates. Now all Canadians know this institution must be reformed to eliminate publicly funded rewards for party hacks and cronies who have no allegiance to the people they are supposed to represent. Perhaps now we will see a productive change in Canadian politics.

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photo by:
Alicia Kalmanovitch

If I were a chief...

by Sonny Orr

When I was young, I often wondered about those guys who seemed to expel a lot of spit while hollering at the top of their lungs at other people. They often looked riled up enough to speak out, but would hold their tongues, until it was their turn to rant and rave. Often, large puffs of tobacco smoke would be violently spewed out when tempers flared and emotions ran high. These were high-level talks back in the day, the local men and women gathered around in a band meeting to discuss and debate matters of concern.

At one of my first band meetings, I heard the band manager defend a friend of mine, who had just got caught wiping out the local church's chicken coop. The band manager's defence was loosely based on the rights of a young hunter, loaded to the hilt with stones for his slingshot, to feed his family. How could he have known that these birds couldn't fly and would just sit there, as he methodically killed the hens one by one? A plentiful bounty, he probably thought, but tonight, in his snotty nosed defiance, he didn't seem to really care or be scared of the consequences of his killing spree. In the end, the band won against the church and my buddy was set free. This was in the late 1960s on Fort George Island and there wasn't that much more to deal with, or much money for that matter.

That meeting left quite an impression on me, as the speaker was the late Josie Sam Atkinson, an eloquent orator and linguistic master. He knew when to turn up the volume, when points had to get across and agreed upon. Today, amidst the official talks in any band meeting, paper handouts and PowerPoint presentations, free coffee and cookies, the courteous yet monotonous speakers drone on about why it's important to buy their product or service or be involved their project. They have nothing on the late Josie when it comes to stirring up support from the masses. In a way, I miss those loud, fiery speeches, as it really showed how much the speaker or leader was willing to go to get the people to back him.

If I were a chief or leader, I would encourage the ones who are passionate and truly believe in their vision of the future, or product they wish to sell, to speak up. Be heard! I think I could throw in a good speech or two to get everyone excited about a change. I would change the way we look at and interpret ourselves in order to inspire us to look beyond our imaginary woes and worries and think positively and realistically.

Sometimes I wonder if we really need to sell off land to get what we want. The funds we get now come from the exploitation of natural resources on our lands anyways. What if we did the exploiting and benefited directly instead of the roundabout funding route that exists now.

I would change the trade-off system. Instead of accepting meagre annual funding packages make it a sell-off position where we would get immediate benefits and total control. This may be exactly the opposite of never selling the land to pay for our needs, but, in reality, someone's lands are funding the monies we get through exploitation, leaving less for those First Nations. But hey, I'm not chief or some great leader... yet.

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A shooting star flames out

Tory Native cover boy Brazeau faces criminal charges and public shame

by Amy German

To say that Senator Patrick Brazeau has been going through a rough patch of late would be an understatement. The controversy over his offensive remarks against Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence quickly blended into a growing Senate scandal over unmerited housing allowances he and other Conservative Senators claimed by allegedly lying about the address of their principal residence.

Now, however, after a shockingly public arrest stemming from a domestic incident February 7, Brazeau faces charges of assault and sexual assault. The arrest was quickly followed by his ejection from the Conservative caucus in the Senate and then culminated in an enforced leave of absence from his senatorial duties, though he will still continue receiving his annual $132,000 salary.

While the Algonquin senator has never shied away from the spotlight to broadcast his partisan Conservative views, often criticizing various rights-based grassroots Native movements, it was late last year when the series of events that would eventually lead to his fall from grace began.

It started with an investigation into Brazeau's $21,000 housing-allowance claim in November 2012. Though he lives in a rented home in Gatineau, he claimed his father's house in Maniwaki as his primary residence. This wasn't a first for Brazeau as he had also claimed his former father-in-law's home on the Kitigan Zibi reserve as his principle residence in other court documents.

These revelations followed his publicly mocking of Attawapiskat Chief Spence as a "fatty" during her hunger strike to support the Idle No More movement. Then, on February 6, Brazeau responded to a report on his questionable income tax returns by CTV reporter Robert Fife by using his Twitter account to accuse Fife of being a "racist."

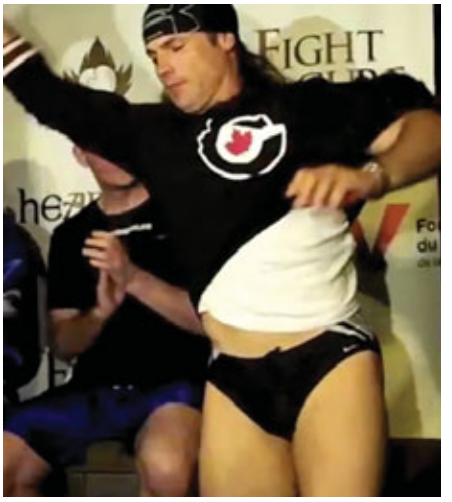
Then, on February 7, Prime Minister Stephen Harper expelled Brazeau from the Conservative caucus after the senator spent his now-famous night in jail following the charges stemming from a domestic dispute. Brazeau was formally charged with assault and sexual assault against an unnamed victim and will return to court in March for trial.

Finally, on February 12, the Senate placed Brazeau on a temporary leave of absence.

Now members of his First Nations community are emerging with messages for him. According to Kitigan Zini Chief Gilbert Whiteduck, these events will hopefully serve as a wake-up call for Brazeau. Recently, Whiteduck accused Brazeau of using his First Nations heritage as an excuse to attack other Natives.

> RECENTLY WHITEDUCK ACCUSED BRAZEAU OF USING HIS FIRST NATIONS HERITAGE AS AN EXCUSE TO ATTACK OTHER NATIVES.

"My general comment about him being a senator right now is that I believe that Brazeau needs to sit down with people, family or whoever and reassess whether he should continue to be a senator. If I had to give him a recommendation, it would be no. I think he needs to get his life together. He needs to get things in order, maybe meet with some Elders to help him reassess and then come back in a more positive and stronger way," Whiteduck said.



Senator Patrick Brazeau

"But this is not the time," he added. "The attacks have been relentless and the information provided, although not totally false, is unfortunately full of holes with misunderstandings and misinformation [about Natives] to the rest of Canadians via the mainstream media."

Whiteduck is saddened by what he sees as a squandered opportunity for Brazeau, given his high profile, to advocate for First Nations people in Canada. His hope had been that Brazeau would have been more "proactive" when it came to supporting Native causes, such as Canada's lengthy list of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. Instead, Brazeau has been notably "counterproductive," said Whiteduck, particularly on the issue of missing women.

Chief Whiteduck acknowledges that he has never met Brazeau in person, even though the senator has at times claimed Kitigan Zibi as his home.

Nor has Kitigan Zibi resident Bridget Tolley, the founder of Families of Sisters in Spirit, an advocacy group for missing and murdered Aboriginal women. Tolley said she reached out to Brazeau for assistance in the past, but her request was ignored.

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Polluter pays

Quebec's new rules will force mining companies to pay for site cleanup

by Amy German

Quebec will finally require mining companies to commit funds to restore their mining sites once their operations are exhausted.

Quebec's minister of natural resources, Martine Ouellet, announced the measure during a conference in Montreal February 8 hosted by the Coalition pour que le Québec ait meilleur mine.

According to a press release issued by Ouellet's ministry, the goal of these new regulations is to ensure that mining sites no longer end up being abandoned. Companies looking to mine in Quebec will be required to have a remediation plan for the entire project and not just for the tailings ponds. They must also post a financial guarantee to cover 100% of the costs of cleanup.

> ANY TIME YOU HAVE MILLIONS OF TONS OF TOXIC WASTE HELD BEHIND AN EARTHEN DAM YOU BETTER HAVE SOMEONE CHECKING UP ON IT ON A REGULAR BASIS.

Currently, there are 680 abandoned mine sites throughout the province, some of which have not been in production for several decades, while others were abandoned as recently as 2004.

"These regulations are long overdue and a necessary step in the right direction. It means that Quebec joins the rest of Canada in terms of requiring full payments or full coverage of closure costs," said Ramsey Hart, Canada Program Coordinator of MiningWatch Canada.

According to Hart, the changes are ideal to avoid abandoned sites in the future, but it depends on how Quebec rolls out this decision. Other jurisdictions in Canada have shown that while some companies may pledge to pay for 100% of closure costs, sometimes those costs were underestimated or were the best estimate at the time the project was started, but now are insufficient.

"It is important to have, in addition to what is just upfront requirements for 100% coverage, public disclosure of those amounts so that there is transparency around them. And, that those amounts be publicly verified and that they are revisited periodically, say every three to five years, so that the costs are updated to the current cost realities out in the world as well as the current realities of the mine sites," said Hart.

Previously Quebec only required companies to make commitments or closure bonds to cover 70% of the costs of cleaning up tailings ponds, payable over 15 years. Hart said this was extremely problematic as there was plenty of room for the government and the public to assume the liability if something went wrong and the company declared bankruptcy and abandoned the property.

While Hart said he is glad to see the new regulations in place to prevent future abandoned sites, he would like to see a renewed interest in those 680 legacy sites as well. He referred to the tailings-pond spill a few years ago in Chapais that required a cleanup process in the Waswanipi River. The incident could have been prevented had the abandoned site been better monitored.

"There are certain types of mines and infrastructure that, when closed down, can be more or less walked away from. But any time you have millions of tons of toxic waste held behind an earthen dam you better have someone checking up on it on a regular basis. Things like fluctuating weather patterns, beavers and other wear and tear can have an impact over time and they take their toll on this kind of infrastructure," said Hart.

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Seeking actors

The First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec has put out a call for five roles in a documentary production. The project is being done with the National Women Association of Canada.

They are seeking two young women and one young man between the ages of 15 and 18. Those who are older but have a youthful look may also try for the roles. The commission is also on the lookout for two grandmothers. Acting experience is preferred but is not required. The candidates must speak English and French.

If you are interested, find more information at www.cdrhpnq.qc.ca.

New Native centre opens in Montreal

The Montreal Native Community Development Centre has opened its doors to the public to offer a wide array of services and activities to the Native residents of Montreal.

Located at 2306 Sherbrooke St. East, the centre will serve as a cultural hub for people of First Nations, Inuit and Métis ancestry providing holistic and cultural services to the community. The multi-service centre will help guide new arrivals to Montreal and give them a place to interact with fellow Natives.

Although the programming for the centre's activities will only be unveiled in March, there is already plenty going on. With a youth room equipped with an Xbox and a television along with foosball tables, it is fertile ground for young people to connect with one another.

The centre already has its first resident artist, Jacques Néwashish, an Atikamekw painter and printmaker who is working on beautifying the walls of the new building. Néwashish is the first of many artists who will be invited to the centre to showcase their artwork throughout the year as well as provide workshops to teach their craft.

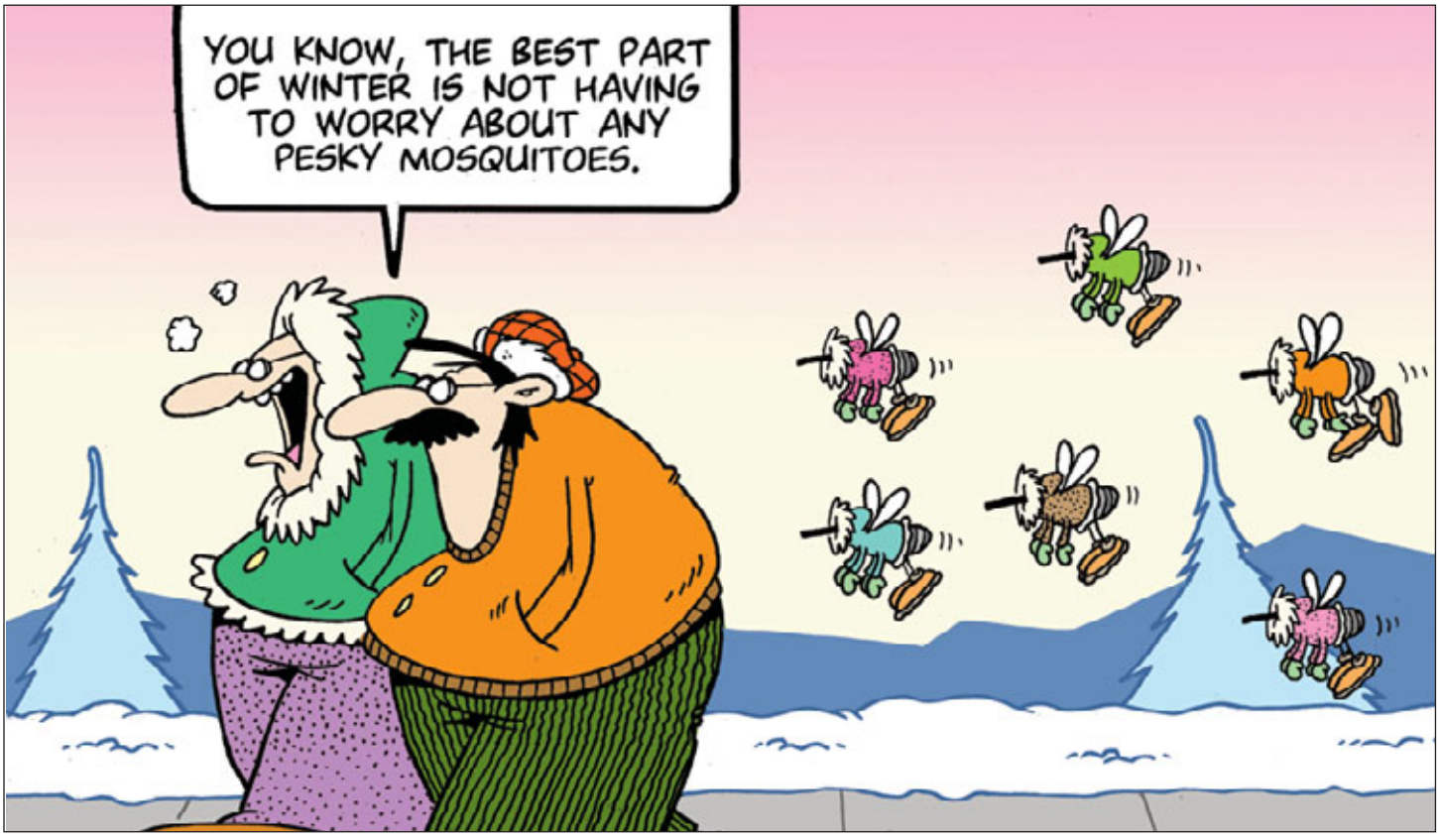
Along with providing a place for youth, the centre is equally focused on providing services for all ages with services and activities that are culturally adapted to serve their needs and interests.

The main goal of the centre is to provide parents with the tools to get their children engaged in cultural events and activities in order to instill pride and reinforce their identity.

New Year's babies

Children are the most precious gift you can give your community. They signal the continuation of family traditions and their people's culture. Every new child is worth being written about and it's always a pleasure to introduce new additions to Eeyou Istchee.

The latest bundles of joy to join the communities, respectively, of Oujé-Bougamou and Mistissini are Jazmen



Jazmen Kaydence Hannah Shecapio Blacksmith

Kaydence Hannah Shecapio Blacksmith and Payton Peggy Hope Linton.

Jazmen was born weighing eight pounds at 12:25 pm on January 1 to proud parents Alice Mattawashish and Jeremiah Shecapio Blacksmith. The mother is doing fine as is baby Jazmen. She has plenty of role models to follow with her three sisters Danielle, Alyssa and Aryelle.

Payton Peggy Hope Linton

Payton was born weighing nine pounds at 8:51 am on January 2 and is the first child of Jonathan Linton and Heather Lily Anne Hughboy. The mother has been doing well since the birth and both her and Payton are healthy.

The Nation apologizes

I would like to extend my most sincere apologies to Buckley George and his family. No one should ever be called names in their life, I know from personal experience the hurt that it causes. I never had any intention to offend and it was a severe lapse in judgment on my part. I regret the harm I have caused by my failure and I am very sorry.

Akiva Levitas
Journalist for the Nation

We sincerely apologize for this error. It was unintentional and we are so sorry that this happened. We regret any pain this has caused you and your family. Thank you so much for bringing this to our attention so we could correct this mistake.

Will Nicholls
Editor-in-chief

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Grand Chief on Idle No More's real meaning

by Matthew Coon Come

Aboriginal peoples' protests have dominated the Canadian media over the past few months. It is winter, it is cold, and yet Indigenous people of all nations and ages are gathering in the rain and snow in unprecedented numbers, all across this country, under the brave descriptive banner of Idle No More.

These grassroots expressions of deep anguish, frustration and resolve are shining a bright spotlight on the deplorable economic and social situation that is endured by so many Aboriginal peoples in this wealthy, land-rich and resource-rich G8 country called Canada.

Idle No More began as a protest concerning unjust and unwise proposed changes to Canada's federal environmental protection regime, contained in federal Bills C-45 and C-38. These pieces of so-called "omnibus" legislation – which have now become law – have radically reduced the environmental protection that used to apply under federal law. For example, as a result of Bill C-45, 99% of Canada's waterways – the lifeblood of our nations' territories – have abruptly lost the minimal protection that previously existed under federal law for environmental assessment purposes.

Idle No More is saying that these sweeping changes to federal environmental protection laws are a serious threat to Indigenous peoples and to our lands and waters. Most Indigenous nations are still living in the hearts of our traditional territories, and many still depend to a great extent on the birds, animals and other natural resources with which we share our lands and waters.

The federal government has declared that it intends to fast-track unprecedented oil, gas, mineral, hydro and other resource exploitation across Canada. "Fast-track" is to weaken or avoid any prior assessment of the social and environmental impacts, come what may. The adverse impacts will affect Indigenous peoples more than anyone else, because we live in and depend on the sustainability of our lands and waters that the federal government is targeting for mega-industrialization.

Importantly, these legal changes affecting our peoples and our territories were passed into federal law without the prior informed consent of our peoples, much less any meaningful advance consultation about our Aboriginal, treaty or other human rights.

"Omnibus" legislation is not a new phenomenon in Canada. And legislation passed without considering the rights of Aboriginal peoples and over our objections is, sadly, not uncommon either. But the broad groundswell of support that Idle No More has activated is new and remarkable. The breadth and depth of this movement presents a challenge and an opportunity for all Canadians.

photo by Susanne Ure

Canada is a country of enormous wealth and immense opportunities. It is also a country that says it upholds certain admirable values, including respect for fundamental human rights, environmental stewardship, and sustainable and equitable development. This may have been somewhat true in the past, but the messaging is wearing thin. The reality, in the eyes of Idle No More, is that Canada's stated adherence to these important values is now a lie.

There are over 600 "First Nations" in Canada, and over 1,000 communities. The average social and economic development status in Indigenous Canada is decades or more

behind the socio-economic status of the country as a whole, whether you look at health, education, labour market participation, life expectancy or income. Idle No More is saying, essentially: "This disparity is obvious and intolerable. It must be fixed. Now and for the future."

Canada has a sophisticated system of governance. It has a constitution, laws, a head of state, legislatures, judiciary, governmental machinery and many other institutions of governance. However, amazingly, none of these many features of this great country were designed or implemented with the meaningful participation (or any participation, actually) of the original peoples in this land, namely Indigenous peoples and their governments. They have been imposed.

Instead, Indigenous peoples have been completely excluded, dispossessed, sidelined, oppressed, suppressed and ignored. Two orders of government, namely the federal and the provincial, each sovereign in their respective spheres, have carved up 100% of the total jurisdictional and resource wealth pie, and written the rules to serve themselves and to isolate and exclude indigenous peoples.

The result is that settler society in Canada – French, English, European and others who recently arrived on these shores – are doing very well in our territories, while Aboriginal peoples' social development is languishing and we continue to experience mass poverty and unemployment, underdevelopment and despair.

Idle No More is not making this harsh diagnosis up. It is fully reviewed and explained in the 4,000 pages of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Reports. It can be read in many judgments of Canada's non-Native courts, and in numerous UN studies and reports.

Aboriginal leaders, myself included, have warned for years that Canada is sitting on a social powder keg. The recent courageous protests by our grassroots people are the inevitable outcome of long-term and widespread frustration, anger, hopelessness – and now determination.

Up to now, Indigenous peoples have been expected, indeed told, to be patient and "realistic". Indigenous peoples have been told that the many solemn agreements they have made in good faith with the Crown over the last 400 years, our treaties, are no longer relevant or meaningful, and are part of Canada's heritage but no longer really part of Canada's governing policies and laws.

The message of Idle No More is simple: Canada must commit itself to a new, consensual relationship with Aboriginal peoples, a respectful, nation-to-nation relationship based upon the treaties. The treaties are the only alternative to Canada being a colonial power in its own land. The only legitimate way forward is for this country to acknowledge that it has three orders of government, Indigenous, federal and provincial. These three orders of government must now fully acknowledge each other's existence, legitimacy and role in the future of this country – including full participation in the benefit and wealth that lies in every Indigenous people's back yard.

"THE RECENT COURAGEOUS PROTESTS BY OUR GRASSROOTS PEOPLE ARE THE INEVITABLE OUTCOME OF LONG-TERM AND WIDESPREAD FRUSTRATION, ANGER, HOPELESSNESS – AND NOW DETERMINATION."

Apologizing for historic wrongs, important as that may be, is no longer adequate. All the apologies must now be translated into changes to the rules, and profound and meaningful changes to social and economic outcomes, so that Indigenous peoples can soon experience standards of living and participation equivalent to that of Canadians in general.

The alternative is continuing illegitimacy for Canada, continuing gross social disparities, and continuing unrest, because Idle No More is not going away.

As I see it, Idle No More also means Excluded No Longer and Included Fully From Now On. Only when there is profound change – including constitutional change – in the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown, and when the social and economic disparities have disappeared, will the protests and unrest become unnecessary.

Matthew Coon Come is the Grand Chief of Eeyouch, the James Bay Cree Nation. He was National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations from 2000 to 2003.

Not yet idle

The Idle No More movement continues with a day of action for Quebec

by Jesse Staniforth

If the meeting point for Montreal's third Idle No More demonstration, Phillips Square, was lost on some of those attending, organizer Melissa Mollen Dupuis spelled it out for the crowd, asking them to turn around and look across the street at the Hudson's Bay Company building.

The Quebec Idle No More (INM) day of action was called for February 10 to mark the 250th anniversaries of both the Treaty of Paris of 1763, which ended the Seven Years' War between England and France, and the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which recognized the territorial rights of First Nations in Quebec and elsewhere.

"The Hudson's Bay Company was created in 1670 on the relationship between Native and non-Native people," Dupuis said, introducing the theme of common cause between Aboriginals and settlers, which she underlined throughout the march, calling on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike people to share responsibility for the land and waters of Canada.

"We have the right to live here," she said, "but we also have the duty to take responsibility for what takes place in this territory. Presently, our responsibility is to recognize the federal government passing laws – C-38 and C-45, which will not be the last – that strip the citizens of these territories of their responsibilities and do not respect Aboriginal rights."

Part protest rally, part history lesson, the INM march wound its way to Old Montreal's Place Royale, site of the 1701 signing of the Great Peace of Montreal treaty which ended wars between Aboriginal Nations and the French. Though the crowd was smaller than the two earlier INM demonstration in December and January, organizer Widia Larivère was pleased with the support.

"Non-Aboriginal people are more open-minded today than they used to be," she said. "There's still racism and prejudice, but more people are curious and willing to engage in dialogue with Native peoples. I've seen a change in attitudes since when I was a kid. I think in general there are a lot of non-Natives who support us in this struggle. We've been living together for 500 years and we still don't know one another. It's important because C-45 and C-38 are issues that concern both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals."

Along the way, the march made stops at important sites in the history of Aboriginal-settler relations. Perhaps the

most significant of these – especially for Crees – was a stop in front of the Hydro-Québec building, where marchers again joined together in a round dance, and listened to a poem against the Plan Nord and resource development on Aboriginal territory by Maikaniss Naa K, which ended with a call to protect the land and waters that marchers took up as a chant.

Further along, the demonstrators stopped in front of the Palais de Congrès. Two days before, other demonstrators had squared off with riot police outside of the trade show on natural resources, where many were arrested. Addressing the crowd, Dupuis said, "People ask me, 'Why don't you take more radical actions? The government takes radical actions!' Thirty-two arrests over a broken window – that's radical! But I continue to organize peaceful actions – because I know that we're doing good, and making a difference. This is the right way to do it."

Dupuis cautioned that she did not want to be misconstrued as focusing too much on issues of divisions among protestors.

"Be careful with the police," she said. "Don't let them turn us against one another – between people who are peaceful and people who want to break things. It's important to look at the source of the problem – where is it coming from? It doesn't come from each other. We all want the same thing."

Speaking at Phillips Square - Melissa Mollen Dupuis (with megaphone) and Sedalia Kawennotas Fazio (with Drum)

Noting that the march for missing and murdered Aboriginal women would occur later, on February 14, Dupuis turned her attention to the building that had so recently housed the Plan Nord salon. "We forget that with the Plan Nord, money is flooding into some of the most impoverished communities in Quebec and Canada. We forget that this money creates prostitution that we never had, and problems with drugs and alcohol."

Along with addictions and prostitution, said Dupuis, comes the spectre of continuing attacks on Aboriginal women, particularly those who are sex workers. She condemned the federal government for cutting funding to Sisters In Spirit and diverting that money to police.

"Two months ago," she said, "a report came out that said that one of the fundamental problems with the investigations into missing and murdered women in Vancouver was racism among the police officers who were supposed to be undertaking these investigations. Rather than giving more money to police, we need to send organizations like Sisters in Spirit to educate the police."

Finally, the march made its way through Old Montreal, before ending at Place Royale, with a closing prayer by Sedalia Kawennotas Fazio, who recalled following former Montreal Mayor Pierre Bourque at a gathering on the same site in 2001 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the Great Peace of Montreal.

Bourque, she said, took the opportunity to welcome the enormous crowd to Montreal. When Fazio took the microphone from him, she said, she welcomed the crowd to Mohawk territory.

"You can't forget where we are," she said. "This is Tioh'tia:ke! This is Mohawk land!"

Montreal daycare manager Alana Phillips, originally from Kahnawake, was pleased with the march, though she had some reservations.

"The turnout is small, compared to the other activities we've had in Montreal, but it's still significant," she said. "It's still a process. It's begun, and we've achieved small steps, but it's something that still needs to continue."

Of the long-term goals for the Idle No More movement, Phillips said, "It's a movement that puts the issue of Aboriginal people in the forefront of the minds of Canadians. Since we're not at the point where we have any serious commitments from the government, or plans, or meetings, it would be bad for the movement to stop any time soon. The pressure – whether it's demonstrations, or dances – is important."

Jeremiah Johnson, from Kahnawake, agreed. "We need to understand that this is not a Native fight, it's a fight that affects all Canadians. The movement has to relate to settlers. Non-Natives are here, and they're here to stay. We have to live together and we have to work together. Relationships need to be forged, ones that both sides can live with."

> "THERE'S STILL RACISM AND PREJUDICE, BUT MORE PEOPLE ARE CURIOUS AND WILLING TO ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH NATIVE PEOPLES. I'VE SEEN A CHANGE IN ATTITUDES SINCE WHEN I WAS A KID."

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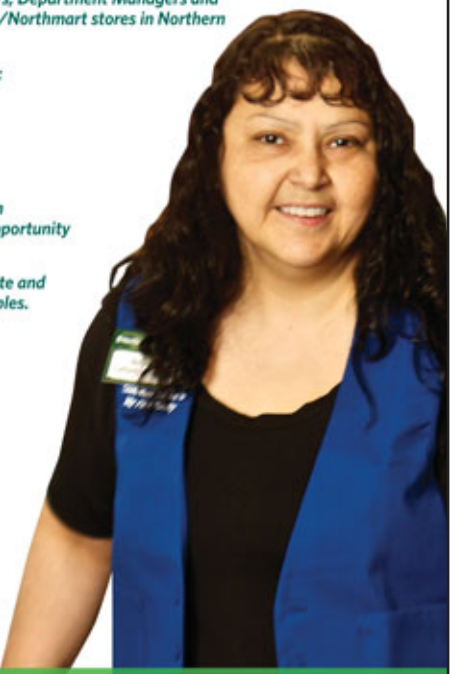

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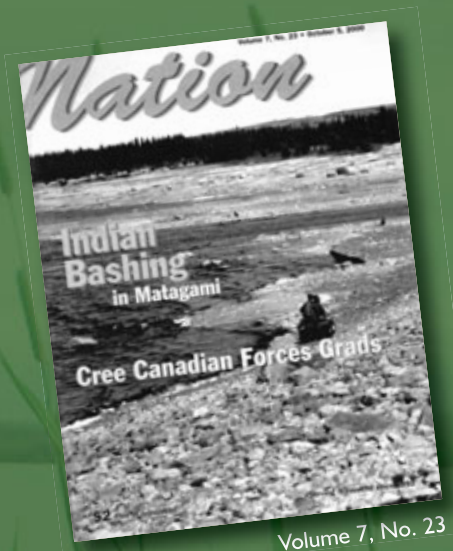

OCTOBER 6, 2000

Ready to govern?

Coming this winter to a community near you is an opportunity to say what kind of Cree government you want.

The Cree Nation Government Working Group plans to hit the road and consult with Crees and Cree entities and businesses on what Iyiyuu governance should be.

Grand Chief Ted Moses says Cree governance can't be decided in an office someplace.

"We have to take it to the people," he said. "It's the only way we can take effective control of our future."

It's a future that Moses says deals with land, resources, language, culture and a way of life.

Moses sees the consultation process as developing an ever-changing master plan for cultural, social, economic, political, spiritual development, healing and de-colonization.

Moses said the new responsibilities and jurisdiction that Crees would be looking at taking on would need money.

Moses doesn't want government handouts, but sees revenue-sharing and direct taxing of resource-exploitation companies as the answer to financing the services and needs of Iyiyuuschii.

Moses sees this as exercising Cree rights and says it's time to take the federal and Quebec governments to task for failing in their fiduciary and treaty obligations to the Crees.

"The right of self-determination is an Aboriginal right. This has been determined by the United Nations and now it is up to Crees to determine the level of participation that we wish to have in that self-determination," said Moses.

Moses said that the Cree Nation would be looking at developing a Cree Nation constitution, what model of government Crees wished to pursue, what principles they wish to govern themselves by, a method of ensuring good relations with other nations and governments (Canada, Quebec and other First Nations) and how the Crees could contribute to healing the Earth, bettering humanity and helping world peace.

All of this stems out of a 1995 mandate that called for the establishment and development of a Cree Nation government that would have control, jurisdiction and authority over all areas of Iyiyuu governance in Iyiyuuschii.

In 1998, the Grand Council of the Crees created the Cree Nation Government Working Group to deal with this issue.

The plans are to have public meetings in all the communities and meetings with the band councils and leadership of Cree institutions like the Cree School Board, CTA, etc.

All the information would be gathered together and organized. The consultation process would also serve to educate as well as listen.

Moses said, "We need everyone's input to make this happen. The tallymen, Elders, youth, men, women and all our existing institutions. We need their help in nation-building because a nation is not just the leadership, it's everyone."

by William Nicholls

UPDATE 2013

Since then the Cree have signed deals with both the Canadian and Quebec governments on Cree governance. This has also led to dismantling the James Bay Municipality, which will be replaced with a new regional government composed of representatives from both Cree and other residents in Eeyou Istchee. The new regional government will have expanded jurisdiction over most of the territory.

Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come said the "agreement marks a significant step towards the modernization of the governance regime in Eeyou Istchee James Bay. More importantly, it signals a firm intention to recognize the appropriate roles of the Crees and of our neighbours in the governance of the territory. We look forward to assuming our rightful place in the governance of the territory."

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The CWEIA's principal mandate is to improve the lives, livelihood and outcomes of Cree women and children in Eeyou Istchee. Through main activities, we seek to ensure the full participation of Cree women - economically, politically, socially and more - so that they may achieve their full potential and contribute to the building of a safe, secure, just and healthy Cree Nation for future generations of Cree beneficiaries. CWEIA strives to create healthy communities, strengthen family roles and responsibilities, nurture and protect our Nishiiyuu ways, and help create the conditions where the traditional values, faith, knowledge and wisdom of our Elders is sustained for all Eeyouch.

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"AS A LAWYER, LIFE FOR ME IS BASED ON WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE TEXT OF A LAW. SO FOR ME, **I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT 'SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY.'** I UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS LEGALLY BECAUSE IT IS NOT FOUND IN ANY LEGAL TEXT IN QUEBEC."

Jean Baril

A fight to the finish

Social acceptability underlines respect for Cree sovereignty. But does it have the legal force to withstand Strateco's court challenge?

by Lyle Stewart

The legal challenge by Strateco Resources to the Quebec government requirement that it obtain "social acceptability" from the Cree before the company's Matoush uranium development project can proceed highlights a key moment in the evolution of Cree sovereignty over its territory.

As a judicial concept, however, the notion of social acceptability is untested. That was a key observation from a panel discussion on the subject during a conference in Montreal February 8. Hosted by the Coalition pour que le Québec ait meilleure mine, the conference focused on the environmental, social and economic impacts of the mining industry in Quebec.

In response to Strateco's lawsuit now before Quebec Superior Court, which also began February 8 with a Strateco motion to change the presiding judge, the Grand Council of the Cree has insisted on the social acceptability threshold that was explicitly identified as necessary by COMEX in its report on the project. COMEX approved Strateco's proposal provided it obtained written consent from the Cree. This is the last regulatory hurdle the company needs to pass in order to start digging in the Otish Mountains north of Mistissini.

Both Mistissini Cree First Nation and the Grand Council categorically reject any uranium development in Eeyou Istchee, and insist that the social acceptability threshold be the ultimate test of whether a project proceed or not in Cree territory.

"The importance of social acceptability of proposed development projects in Eeyou Istchee is an essential aspect of the nation-to-nation relationship between the Cree Nation and Quebec," said Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come in a press release February 5. "Strateco's legal action represents a fundamental challenge to this principle, and to our treaty rights, particularly the JBNQA."

The case will likely create new legal territory, and threatens to be only the opening shot in a long court battle. For one observer, environmental and Aboriginal rights lawyer Jean Baril, the outcome is far from certain because the legal strength of the social acceptability requirement is not clearly defined in Quebec law.

"As a lawyer, life for me is based on what is written in the text of a law," he told a packed hall at the Québec meilleure mine conference during the panel on social acceptability. "So for me, I don't know what you're talking about when you talk about 'social acceptability.' I understand the concept, but I don't know what it means legally because it is not found in any legal text in Quebec."

United Against Nuclear in James Bay/Eeyou Istchee

The Matoush project has not obtained the support of everyone in James Bay/Eeyou Istchee contrary to what our elected officials claim. Citizens of this region built on the mining development, yet we are against the exploration and exploitation of uranium in James Bay/Eeyou Istchee. We are asking the government of Quebec to recognize the Jamesiens, Crees and close to 300 municipalities across the province who are united against the development of the nuclear power network in Quebec. We are asking them to refuse Strateco's project to build an underground ramp of exploration.

During its public consultations, Strateco was unable to convince the Cree and James Bay populations that the future facilities would be safe and that they would respect the integrity of the environment around the site. COMEX's report from July 2011 identified several aspects of the project that were not sufficiently clarified by the company to the public: incomplete characterization of the biophysical elements of the future site, absence of specific details for an emergency plan to be used in the case of an accident, and absence of maps and clear measurements to demonstrate that the Camie river and Mistassini lake, the largest natural lake in Quebec, would be protected.

COMEX also predicts that the project's perceived risks, whether real or not, are sufficient to damage the quality of life of the citizens of Mistissini if the exploration phase proceeds. In effect, the uncertainty that remains in the community could contribute to modifying traditional practices by users of the concerned territory, create intercultural tension and destroy links that are being forged for the new governance project.

We are also opposed to this project because it compromises the tourist experience offered in the new Albanel-Témiscamie-Otish (ATO) National Park. The exploration site is located only 15 km from the limits of this protected area and we fear that users will be exposed to the noise of operations carried by the prevailing wind that blows directly towards the park. In addition, the negative perception of the uranium industry in the public would harm the image of the ATO Park. The tourism industry is growing in our region and it is irresponsible for our elected officials to assume that visitors will be indifferent to the uranium project.

Finally, we are in favour of the precautions advocated by the doctors who are part of the Working Committee of the Uranium Industry in the Côte-Nord. The health repercussions resulting from long-term exposure to mining residue are currently undervalued. These precautionary measures also apply to managing the waste that results from nuclear power plants. Burying radioactive materials is not only costly, but it results in unknown consequences that we do not want our children to inherit.

The development in Northern Quebec already includes many mining, forestry and tourist projects that are innovative in their sustainability and have received the support of the population.

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Quebec meilleure mine conference

Only in the legal principles underlining Quebec's Sustainable Development Act, adopted in 2006, has Baril found a rough equivalent to requirements for social acceptability.

Among them is the Act's principle of "Participation and commitment: The participation and commitment of citizens and citizens' groups are needed to define a concerted vision of development and to ensure its environmental, social and economic sustainability."

In order to assure the full participation and support of the public, Baril notes however, the following principle is primordial. It provides for "Access to knowledge: Measures favourable to education, access to information and research must be encouraged in order to stimulate innovation, raise awareness and ensure effective participation of the public in the implementation of sustainable development."

This is where various Quebec laws become contradictory, Baril pointed out. The problem, he insisted, is that social acceptability on the part of a community affected by a mining project cannot be completely legitimate in the absence of information of the potential environmental, social and economic impacts the project could have on the community. And in Quebec, this access is still severely limited.

For instance, the Quebec Mining Act supersedes provincial access to information statutes by specifying that, "no person has access, before the abandonment, revocation or expiry of the mining concession, licence or lease for which they were made or drawn up, to the maps, reports and other documents contemplated in section 119 or required with respect to a mining right relating to petroleum and natural gas, brine or an underground reservoir."

A number of other laws prevent the public from learning about potential impacts from resource extraction projects, or the basis upon which they obtained government approval, Baril added. Quebec, therefore, "is far behind Europe and other Canadian provinces on the principle of equal access to information. In Quebec, we do not have equal rights. Businesses and the government keep important information that is not available to the public at large."

For that reason, public consultation exercises are not undertaken on an equal footing in Quebec. Project promoters are armed with knowledge kept secret from the people their projects will impact the most. Social acceptability in this situation is next to impossible because the public is not allowed to fully judge individual projects on their merits.

For the Cree, the advantage over other Quebec communities rests on their participation in COMEX, two of whose five members must be appointed by the Grand Council, and which is based on the Cree's nation-to-nation treaty rights negotiated in the JBNQA and reaffirmed in the Paix des Braves of 2002. The question to be determined is whether the power of COMEX's decisions overrides other Quebec laws that are overwhelmingly weighted in favour of private corporations such as Strateco.

The Cree were to have been represented at the panel on social acceptability, first by Mistissini environmental officer Rod Quinn, then by communications consultant Jean Cardinal. However, the schedule conflict with the beginning of the Strateco court case February 8 precluded Cree participation in the conference.

Dr. Isabelle Gingras, a member of the Québec meilleure mine coalition and the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, observed that even if Strateco pulls out a win before Quebec Superior Court on narrow legal arguments, it risks losing before another important body, the court of public opinion, for its efforts to suppress the requirement for social acceptability.

"Win or lose, this will blow up in the company's face," Dr. Gingras said. "As we have seen with the Idle No More movement, the lack of respect for environmental and treaty rights is beginning to snowball into something much bigger."

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Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

By Amy German

Heart smart eating

With all of the focus on love and romance in February, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that the health of our actual hearts takes centre stage, as February is Heart Month.

Between the frigid weather, the endless shovelling and the store shelves laden with St. Valentine's Day sweets, there actually isn't a better time to look at whether the life you lead is doing your heart a favour or fast tracking you to a fatal kind of a broken heart.

A recent report by the Canadian Institute of Health Information reports that Aboriginals are more likely to be admitted to hospital for a heart attack and at an earlier age than the general population of Canada.

The report looked at residents in areas with high and low Aboriginal populations and found that disparities exist in rates of heart attacks and hospital experiences of heart-attack patients.

The fact that Aboriginals have much higher rates of diabetes and are less likely to receive the kind of care they need – such as angiograms to examine their arteries or procedures to open up the blocked arteries and other socio-economic factors – were named as contributors by the authors of the study.

At the same time, some individuals are more prone to cardiovascular illness than others, particularly those who have certain genetic factors that can be seen by a family history of heart illness. Put more simply, if your ancestors had heart-related illness, you too could find yourself in the same boat.

This is why it is never a bad time to start eating heart smart in order to up your chances for a longer and healthier life.

If you are not sure what constitutes a heart-healthy meal, we've got some simple guidelines and several wonderful recipes by leading experts who know their way around the kitchen and can keep the blood-a-pumping.

The following delicious delights all employ the basic principles of heart-healthy eating: low in unhealthy fats and cholesterol, high in fibre, controlled portion sizes and utilizing as many fruits and vegetables as possible.

The first three recipes are adapted from *Heart Smart: The Best of Heart Smart Cooking*, Bonnie Stern's fabulous cookbook that was recommended by the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Please note that to make these meals even better for your heart, you can bypass the store-bought meats for any wild meat you may have in your freezer as game is certified heart healthy by the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay.

Pasta e Fagioli
(a festive Italian soup)
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 onions chopped
2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
1 carrot chopped
¼ teaspoon of hot red pepper flakes, optional
1 28-oz can of plum tomatoes with juices
4 cups of chicken stock
2 oz of smoked ham in one piece
1 19-oz can of white kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 cup of small, whole wheat macaroni
2 tablespoons of Parmesan for garnish

1) Heat oil on medium heat in a large saucepan. Add onions, garlic, carrot and cook for 5-7 minutes or until tender and then add hot pepper flakes
2) Add tomatoes with their juices and break up tomatoes with spoon, add stock and bring to a boil. Add ham. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes
3) Add beans and cook for 10 minutes. Remove ham, dice and add back to soup
4) Puree half of the soup and then return all soup to saucepan. Bring to a boil
5) Add pasta and cook for 10 minutes, stirring often. You can add some water if you find the soup too thick.
6) Serve

Smoked trout spread
(makes two cups)
½ pound of filleted and deboned smoked trout
1 cup of plain Greek yoghurt or light ricotta cheese
2 tablespoons of lemon juice
1 tablespoon of grated white horseradish
2 tablespoons of dill (fresh is best or 1 tablespoon of dry)
2 tablespoons of chopped green onions
½ teaspoon of dried pepper
Salt to taste

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1) Break up your trout and chop in a food processor if you have one or with a knife if you don't
2) Blend in the yoghurt, lemon juice and horseradish
3) Stir in dill, onions and pepper
4) Serve on mini-pitas or baguette rounds

Texas Chili

(makes 12 servings)
1 ½ pounds of lean stewing beef, diced (or any kind of wild meat will also do)
1 ½ of lean stewing pork
½ cup of flour
1 tablespoon of vegetable oil
4 large onions, finely chopped
6 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
3 tablespoons of chili powder
1 tablespoon of ground cumin
1 tablespoon of dried oregano
1 teaspoon of cayenne
½ teaspoon of pepper
1 28-oz of plum tomatoes, broken up with the juices
1 cup of water (or you can use beer)
2 19-oz cans of kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 cup of grated cheddar cheese

1) Pat meat dry, then toss with flour
2) Heat oil in pot on medium-high heat, brown meat in batches
3) Discard all but one tablespoon of the fat, return to heat, add onions and garlic, cook on medium for 10 minutes. Add spices
4) Return meat to skillet and mix well, add stock, bring to a boil. Cook uncovered for 2-3 hours until meat is tender and mixture is thick. Stir in beans
5) Transfer to a 3 quart casserole, top with cheese and bake uncovered in a 350° degree oven for 30 minutes

The following two recipes are from Anne Lindsay's *Lighthearted Everyday Cooking*. Lindsay is another expert in the field of healthy recipes and her heart-healthy meals have been heralded as scrumptious.

Hamburger and Noodle Skillet Supper

3 cups of egg noodles (about ¼ pound)
1 pound of lean ground beef or ground wild meat if you have it
1 onion chopped
1 small zucchini cut into thin, 2-inch long strips
1 sweet red pepper cut into cubes
1¼ cups of mushrooms
4 tomatoes cut into cubes
½ cup of tomato sauce
¼ cup of chopped fresh parsley (optional)
1 teaspoon of dried basil
½ teaspoon of dried oregano
Salt & pepper to taste

1) In a large pot of boiling water cook pasta until tender but firm and then drain
2) Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook meat over medium heat, stirring to break up until browned, about five minutes
3) Add onion and cook for four minutes, add zucchini, sweet pepper and mushrooms, stirring over medium heat for five minutes. Add tomatoes, tomato sauce, parsley, basil and oregano.
4) Simmer for five minutes and then stir in noodles. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

Pineapple-Carrot Bars

¾ cup of brown sugar
2 tablespoons of vegetable oil
1 teaspoon of vanilla
1 egg
1 cup of whole-wheat flour
1 tablespoon of cinnamon
1 teaspoon of baking powder
1 teaspoon of baking soda
1 cup of finely grated carrots
2/3 of drain, crushed pineapple
½ cup of raisins
¼ cup of milk

1) In a large bowl combine sugar, oil, vanilla and egg. Stir well and set aside
2) In a separate bowl combine flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and then add to sugar mixture, stirring well
3) Stir in carrots, pineapple, raisins and milk
4) Pat mixture into a 13x9-inch cooking pan that has been lightly coated with cooking spray (Pam)
5) Bake at 350° for 25 minutes or until top is golden
6) Cool before cutting into bars and store in fridge

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Hydlo and FRIENDS unplugged

Meet the new host!

For six years, Réal Courcelles has been co-hosting the Hydlo and Friends show with Luke Macleod from JBCCS. After over 75 shows, Réal is passing the puck to his colleague, Luc Duquette. On behalf of all listeners, we want to thank Réal for his great contribution to the show!

Luc Duquette has been working as an advisor in Aboriginal relations at Hydro-Québec for the past ten years. Like Réal, he works closely with the Cree communities of Eeyou Estchee, visiting them regularly to meet with their representatives. If you see him, feel free to suggest subjects for the show!

Next show: Wednesday, March 13, at 8:00 a.m.

Hydlo and Friends is a radio show broadcast on JBCCS. The hosts discuss the environmental follow-up activities related to the Eastmain-1-A/Sarcelle/Rupert project, as well as the concerns of land users with regard to Hydro-Québec's facilities and activities.

Luc Duquette, Luke MacLeod and Réal Courcelles at the JBCCS studio in Mistissini, during Réal's last show in January.

For more information, visit www.hydloandfriends.com

Growing opportunities

Roundtable will focus on youth job creation in Eeyou Istchee

by Akiva Levitas

Looking for a career is one of the toughest choices to make early on in life. People the world over search far and wide to find industries and regions that are flourishing. Fortunately, Cree youth with a post-secondary degree are offered numerous career paths in the bustling economy right here.

On March 16-17, the Grand Council of the Crees invites all post-secondary students of Eeyou Istchee, and their families, to "Becoming Masters in Our Homeland", the Roundtable on Capacity Building at the Westin Hotel in Ottawa.

"We need our youth to have a burning desire to contribute to the building of a Cree Nation. We are at a point in our history when we need the best from every citizen," said Grand Chief Mathew Coon Come in a video invitation to the youth of Eeyou Istchee.

The event will be hosted by the Grand Council of the Crees, the Cree School Board, the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay, Niskamoon, the Cree Nation Youth Council, the Board of Compensation (BOC) and CREECO.

The idea for the roundtable started in September 2012, when a Cree negotiator felt that it would be beneficial to pass on information about all of the agreements that affect the Cree in the territory as well as informing how Cree individuals can benefit from these agreements.

"The hope is to pass on information to post-secondary students and young people," said Darlene Cheechoo, the newly appointed chairperson of the BOC and president of CREECO. "We want to instill a sense of pride and make them aware of the opportunities that are available to them within Eeyou Istchee."

Cheechoo will be presiding over her first meeting in late February when the BOC will lay out its plans for the year. "I want to be as inclusive as possible and get as many new ideas as possible. I want to hear what the nine communities are doing and needing," said Cheechoo. "One of my major priorities is improving awareness and knowledge of what [CREECO] does and why it exist."

> "WE WANT TO INSTILL A SENSE OF PRIDE AND MAKE THEM AWARE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO THEM WITHIN EEYOU ISTCHEE."
>
> DARLENE CHEECHOO

And there are plenty of opportunities at the various companies under CREECO, such as the Cree Construction and Development Company, Air Creebec, Quality Inn Val-d'Or and Eeyou Baril. The diversity of the available positions can be a difficult choice for a young person, which is why such a roundtable is necessary in order to give advise and direction in this booming job market.

The opportunities in the various industries are staggering. Even if you are not quite sure what you want to do there is something for everyone, including accounting, managerial positions, and technical work, such as maintenance and piloting.

Training is also being emphasized at the roundtable with different choices in fields provided by Niskamoon in association with various technical and vocational schools in the province. The Cree School Boardv through its adult education programs is looking to fill in the gaps where training is needed. "CREECO itself is not involved in education, but we do contribute where we can," said Cheechoo. "We're trying to expand what we provide to young people in terms of mentoring and internship opportunities."

Choosing a career path is no small decision and guidance from Cree leaders and individuals involved in the diverse industries of Eeyou Istchee will help in making a sound decision. Closing off his video, Coon Come said, "I invite you, post-secondary students, to a roundtable. To hear what is available so we as leaders can point you in the direction so that you can have a future to decide how you want to contribute to the building of a great Cree Nation."

Walkabout

Wemindji residents use their feet to fight substance abuse

by Eleanor Cowan

photo by Alicia Kalmanovitch

Sometimes you just have to vote with your feet. On November 23, 2012, Wemindji did just that with "Enough is Enough", a community walk that provided an opportunity for residents to express their heart-felt sentiments about the abuse of alcohol and drugs.

Elementary and secondary students from the Maquatua Eeyou Schoo put on warm boots and, along with their teachers, headed to the Sports Complex where they were welcomed by Lieutenant Calvin Hester of the Wemindji detachment of the Eeyou Eenou Police Force, his deputies and special guest, the EEPD police mascot, who brought the children much laughter and delight.

Hester invited Pastor Randy de Carlo of the Wemindji Christian Fellowship to offer a moment of prayer before the community set out on a walk wove through the streets of Wemindji. Elders, grandparents and parents, health professionals from the clinic, Social Services and the Community Wellness Centre, workers from the Youth Centre, volunteers from the Fire

photo by Alicia Kalmanovitch

Department, and daycare educators with their little charges wearing paper petitions pinned to tiny pink and blue snowsuits, as well as staffers from all over town voiced, with the steady crunch of snow beneath their feet, their feelings about drug and alcohol use.

Arriving at the Youth Centre an hour later, walkers were welcomed with sandwiches and cake and listened attentively as Hester spoke about a different reality that is possible for Wemindji. Hester celebrated the degree of intelligence, enthusiasm, talent and skill that exists in the community, a capacity that can grow stronger over time. He said we must guard against being dulled by cheap-thrill chemicals and alcohol, expensive drugs that take but never give. Hester said our excellent daily choices can make our dream come true.

Hester took the opportunity to thank his colleagues for their tireless work in the community. He said he was honoured and proud to work with such devoted individuals as Officers Bradley W. Georgekish, David Atsynia, Gregg Ratt, Melanie Jacobs and Patrick Masty.

Deputy Chief Dennis Georgekish made a plea to the youth to avoid adding to the hurt that already exists. Georgekish advised making smart choices and decisions to make the community and families proud. Georgekish thanked Hester for establishing the walk, which provides a respectful way, especially for children, to communicate their feelings to those they know and love who might be abusing alcohol or drugs – or selling them.

Alicia Kalmanovitch, a member of Quebec's Youth Fusion, was particularly proud to watch Maquatua Eeyou School students (Grades 3 to 6) carry a six-foot banner that represented weeks of careful planning and construction. Kalmanovitch supports fledgling youth leaders in the community by establishing a variety of groups and clubs to engage students in learning. She said education is the best prevention. The proud sign, written in the Cree language, read "Let's all put a STOP to Drugs and Alcohol."

There is no event that does not yield a surprise and the "Enough is Enough" gathering at the Youth Centre was no exception. Out of the large crowd emerged a young Cree man from Alberta, resplendent in red bandana and shirt, sneakers and sweat pants, who gathered the children into a wide circle to produce a rhythmic musical sound to accompany his dance. Shayne Martell, a member of Youth Fusion, leapt into the centre of the circle and danced a strenuous hip-hop routine. Arms, legs and torso sweeping the floor, this dancer-come-gymnast performed so well that all music ceased even as little mouths formed open circles of "Wow". His dance over, Martell stood to his full height and asked a single question, "Could I have done that if I'd been drinking?"

The children were thrilled to answer with a loud and resounding "No!"

photo by Alicia Kalmanovitch

photo by Rhonda Georgekish

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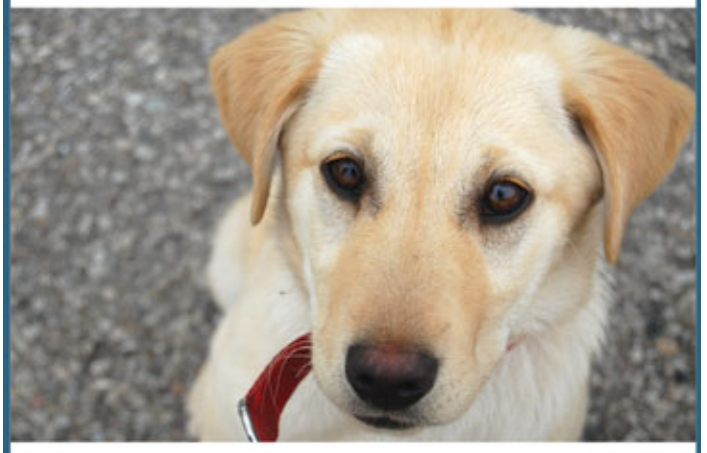

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Gearing up for dialogue

Truth and Reconciliation Commission announces a four-day hearing in Montreal

by Jesse Staniforth

Montreal will host a four day national Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearing this April.

TRC hearings in Quebec have already taken place in Mani-Utenam, near Sept-Îles, and Val-d'Or. Two more hearings will be held next month, in La Tuque March 5-6 and – crucially for the Crees of Eeyou Istchee – in Chisasibi March 19-20.

All these hearings will lead into the TRC Quebec National Event, to be held at Montreal's Queen Elizabeth Hotel April 24-27. Everyone is welcome to attend and those who cannot can watch the hearings live on the internet (at www.trc.ca).

Discussion of the issue of Indian residential schools (IRS) and their survivors is an unhappy and difficult activity, and the tone of speakers at the February 7 press conference to announce the event ranged from grave to truly upset.

It began with an opening prayer by former Kahnawake Grand Chief Andrew Delisle Sr. (1968 to 1980), who also welcomed guests to Mohawk territory.

"I live in Kahnawake," said Delisle, "and it feels very restricted for me. I remember my ancestors used to be able to travel the lengths of America without any boundaries, and without anybody stopping us. We used to take the resources and live from that. But now we're restricted."

Desisle attended a residential school in Victoriaville in the 1940s and 1950s, but said he was fortunate that, unlike so many IRS survivors, he went to a school where the priests were interested in learning Mohawk culture from him, rather than destroying it.

"It was very different from the experiences of so many other people," he said.

But even for those few who were fortunate enough to have had experiences in residential schools that were not genocidal, he added, "each reservation is a residential school. We are all ex-students in residential schools, because our reservations used to restrict us from talking our languages, in many cases. They took away a lot of our customs and cultures. We had to ask permission to leave the reservation. We had to ask permission to sell the products we made. We had to give up hunting and learn planting. So I make that comparison sincerely. People who were in residential schools suffered more than we did. But we also, on the reservations, experienced a form of residential schools."

Delisle went on to underline that Mohawk society is structured around peace, honour, trust and respect, and encouraged the process of the TRC.

> "WE NEED TO FORGIVE EACH OTHER OR AT LEAST APPRECIATE THAT SOMEBODY IS TRYING TO DO SOMETHING TO CORRECT THE PROBLEMS THAT EXIST."

"We need to forgive each other," he said, "or at least appreciate that somebody is trying to do something to correct the problems that exist. Residential school survivors are suffering. But I also wonder if non-Indian society is suffering as well, for what their brothers and sisters did to us. Whether people in the modern day are sorry for what their ancestors did."

Following Delisle, Marie Wilson, one of the three TRC commissioners, spoke.

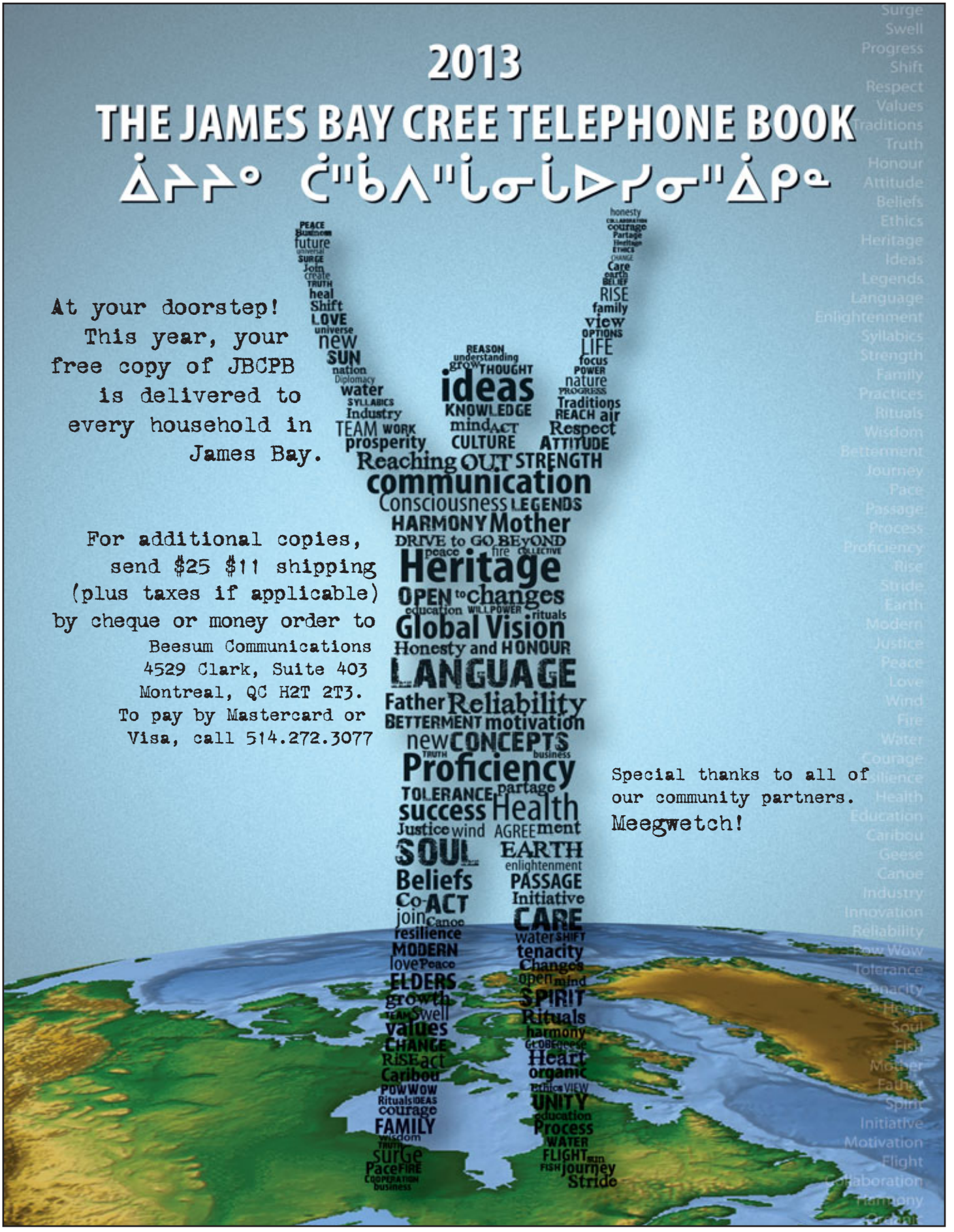
"Our base goal is something very important, which is to contribute to healing: the healing of individuals, of families, of communities, of nations, of relationships between nations, of churches, and of society at large. But it's also to contribute to education. Education inside families, where silence that denied the deeds of the past was common for decades, and where children did not know what had happened to their parents and their grandparents."

Former Kahnawake Grand Chief Andrew Delisle

Brian McDonough, director of the Social Action Office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Montreal, is the spokesperson for the churches participating in the TRC.

"Not everything that took place in Indian residential schools was negative," McDonough claimed. "Many people worked in these schools with goodwill and great generosity. Nonetheless, these schools reflected a policy of assimilation of Aboriginal peoples."

The TRC must go beyond expressions of regret and demands for forgiveness, McDonough observed. "We must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work together with Aboriginal people toward building a future based on mutual respect. For Christian churches, the Truth and Reconciliation Council offers a position from which to build a respectful future by honestly examining the past – its dark sides, but also its positive sides."

McDonough's statements led to aggressive questioning from the media. McDonough seemed flustered and defensive, and asked the media to recall that Christian churches also made positive contributions to Aboriginal culture and languages.

"The pangs of conscience that we feel today are different from those someone might have felt in 1840 when these policies were instituted," he said. "And I must underline here that religious men, Christians, also contributed to the preservation of these cultures, such as through the invention of the written lexicon of Aboriginal languages by missionaries. But this does not hide in any way the fact that Indian residential schools alienated and excluded young people from their families and their futures in a way that is, today, absolutely unacceptable. That is why we are participants in this work toward healing."

The press conference ended with the introduction of two new honorary witnesses, members of the general public whose role, according to the TRC, is to "[safeguard] historic moments by bearing witness and carrying forward to others the truth and importance of such events."

TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson

The first witness, Charles-Mathieu Brunelle (director general of Montreal's Space for Life, which includes the Biodome, Insectarium, Botanical Garden and Planetarium), was overwhelmed with emotion during his speech, pausing several times for air.

"I want to be a person who helps to multiply the message of marginalized peoples," he said. "I want to play a role in modifying perceptions, to destroy prejudices that exist. In collaborating with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this is for me a way to reinforce and celebrate the riches of First Nations cultures. We place our hands in theirs, and we look into their eyes as we ask them to guide us toward a better place."

Éloge Butera, the second honourable witness, is a survivor of the Rwandan genocide. He recalled being singled out as a young child in Grade 2, along with other members of the Tutsi ethnic group, by his Hutu teachers called Tutsis "cockroaches" and "sub-humans."

Upon arriving in Canada a decade ago, Butera said he was shocked to learn of the history of residential schools.

"Even here, in the one home where I would at last be safe," he said, "the one place I would at last be free to pursue my dreams and education, a grave injustice had yet to be redressed. And indeed, the harm done to First Nations in this country was awfully reminiscent of some of my own experiences as a child. A policy that was meant to 'kill the Indian in the child' is certainly not worthy of Canada."

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UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

Melodie's first joke

by Xavier Kataquapit

Melodie is only nine months old and she is already a comedian. My friends Serge and Lyne had their granddaughter, little Melodie, up to their chalet in the wilderness recently. I met the pretty little girl and her parents Jennifer and Mathieu a few weeks ago at the lakeside retreat.

I am always amazed at how open, kind, full of good humour and generally sensitive French Canadians are. That is a generalization, but so far in my life I have found that to be true. One thing for sure when the Europeans came to this land, the French easily mixed with the Native people and, as a matter of fact, that is why we have such a large Métis population today. Other European cultures were more formal and conservative. Happily, I have a lot of wonderful French-Canadian neighbours.

In my remote little place in the wilderness, way up north, things get very quiet. Most of the time all I ever hear are the songbirds whistling to each other in the trees, the loons crying in echoes on the lake or the wolves howling far in the distance.

Sometimes in this quiet my imagination gets the best of me. I hear rustles in the brush or thuds that could only mean the movement of large mammals on the land. At best, I think of the moose on the run from wolves or in search of tasty saplings. At worst, my mind conjures up images of huge black bears prowling just outside the clearing near my camp. These bears have menacing red eyes and snort like the hounds of hell. Much of the time, I leave an axe within reach simply to make myself feel better.

Not long ago, I was up at the far end of the lake. This is a place of towering poplars and majestic pine. A friend and I were collecting a little firewood when we heard a sound in the deep woods.

At first we ignored it as some muffled high-pitched cry of a small animal or bird. We kept working but with a little anxiety. The sound became impossible to ignore at one point.

We stopped and listened carefully. Of course, thoughts of the big black northern bear were on our minds. Recently we had seen bears down the road and my neighbours Chantal and Alain had pointed out tracks nearby.

Waaaww… came the sound from the far end of the lake. We listened intently and the cry came again and this time I realized it must be a baby bear cub. There might be two or three I thought. Then, of course, it occurred to me that the mother would be nearby.

Stories of murderous rampages by outraged mother bears came to mind. I know there is nothing worse in the forest than meeting up with a full-grown mother bear and her cubs. I realized that in this case, no human is safe as the mother will do her best to eliminate what she thinks is a danger to her cubs.

The cry of the small bear cub moved closer and seemed to be travelling towards us. We held tight to our axes and ran in sheer panic and fear towards our half-ton truck on the dirt road up the hill.

The old Ford never looked so good. Once inside with the doors slammed shut and the windows rolled up tight, we peered out at the forest and the lake in great anticipation. We had no doubt that the mother and her cubs were on their way towards us.

Suddenly, there was Serge, Lyne, Jennifer, Mathieu and beautiful little baby Melodie all sitting happily on their new pontoon boat coming out of the bay nearby where we had been working. The floating platform parted the waters quietly driven by an electric motor. The peace was broken only by the muffled cries of sweet little Melodie who was urging the family back to the chalet for lunch. This floating family waved at us enthusiastically from the lake.

I looked at my friend and we both realized our fears of the unknown in the midst of this vast wilderness had turned the cries of a baby for lunch into a family of bloodthirsty black bears. We began to laugh uncontrollably as we exited the old Ford and waved back at our friends floating on the mirror-like surface of the lake. Melodie's muffled cries echoed all around the bay.

It may be a few years before Melodie realizes the joke she played on us in the far-north wilderness that summer day, but one thing is for sure, she gave us a good story. There are still sounds in the forest that baffle me and cause me to conjure up all kinds of threatening images, but I pause to check first whether Melodie is somewhere on the lake.

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- Maintains an updated list of work to be done and periodically reports on the status of activities in progress
- Draws up the weekly planning schedule (electrical and mechanical) in collaboration with the other departments
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- Participates in the maintenance budgeting process
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BIRTHS

We would like to announce the safe arrival of our baby Jazmen Kaydence Hannah Shecapio Blacksmith born on January 1st, 2013 @ 12:25 pm weighing 8 pounds!! She joins sisters Danielle, Alyssa and Aryelle Shecapio Blacksmith. She is a beautiful blessing. Big thank you to my sister Deanna Mianscum for being there for the birth of baby Jaz! Baby Jaz is happy and healthy baby! Happy New Year to everyone! It sure was a great New Year for us!! (Alice Mattawashish & Jeremiah Shecapio Blacksmith, Ouje)

BIRTHDAYS

I would like to wish my beautiful son MONTGOMERY HOWSON a Happy 6th Birthday. I can remember the day you were born and the day your father Gilles St.Gelais called me to tell me how happy he was to have another son. I am a very proud mother to have such a great son. We all love you always no matter what. From your mom Christina Howson and your sister Sieanna Batisse, your Mama**.**

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

'We Are Proud Parents' is a bi-weekly round table parenting group held in the kitchen of the Maquatua Eeeyou School in Wemindji every Tuesday and Thursday evening from 5.30 to 7.30 p.m. Discussions, latest parenting research, tips and ideas are awith a healthy hot supper prepared for busy participants by course animators, Eleanor Cowan and Alicia Kalmanovitch. Course runs from January 15 - February 28, 2013. "Drop in for a class or two. We'd love to meet you!" For more info contact eleanor_cowan04@yahoo.ca

Human Rights education and information activities for community organisations The Education and Cooperation Division of the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse is offering your community association free of charge a variety of human rights workshops and resources. The main goal of the workshops is to promote a culture of human rights throughout Quebec society. We will be dealing with key human rights values, as well as their accompanying responsibilities. To obtain more information, we invite you to read the enclosed leaflet or to consult our website at: http://www.cdpdj.qc.ca . Click on English, and go to Training, and then Community groups. If you are interested in any of the workshops, please do not hesitate to contact us to plan a workshop at a time convenient for you.

Call for digital arts, visual arts, cinema and video projects for the production of works within the framework of the Exposition de synthèse et de référence sur les Premières Nations et les Inuit du Québec [tentative title] at the Musée de la civilisation. Registration deadline: January 26, 2013. For more information: T: 418-528-2582 Toll free: 1-800-897-1707 Email: marianne.thibeault@calq.gouv.qc.ca www.calq.gouv.qc.ca

FNQLHSSC is organizing a contest and invites youths aged 13 to 25 to create a video illustrating what wellness represents to them. The deadline for submitting videos is January 31, 2013 and the voting period (online on Facebook) will begin on February 1, 2013 as part of First Nations Wellness Day. The contest's rules will be available soon on the Facebook page of the FHQLHSSC at www.facebook.com/cssspnql.

Available now in your Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Online Community. In videos and Q&As, on location at the Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Conference Women Leaders workshop and online across Canada... Sheila Isaac, Anne Noonan, Julie Pelletier, Nicole Robertson and Tracy Scarlett share insights with women from across Canada on leveraging leadership, overcoming obstacles and succeeding in business. This unique video series illustrates how to do it! It's real, it's useful and it's FREE. www.ideaconnector.net/womens-sharing-circle

TD Scholarships for Community Leadership - Apply today! Applications available at Your high school or CEGEP (in Quebec) Online at www.td.com/scholarship or Call 1-800-308-8306 TTY (Text telephone) 1-800-361-1180

Cultural Manual for Foster and Adoptive parents of Aboriginal Children, launched at the last Gathering of the NETWORK on October 3... CHECK IT OUT! www.reseaumtlnetwork.com/eng/Portals/5/Cultural%20Manual.pdf

The Aviva Community Fund is Canada's longest running online community competition. With over $2.5 million dollars given away to date, the Aviva Community Fund is making a difference in communities across the country. Submit your idea for positive change and have a chance at sharing in this year's $1 million Aviva Community Fund.

For more info go to http://www.avivacommunityfund.org/

Kid's Help Phone Line: 1-800-668-6868 (www.kidshelpphone.ca)

Youth Helpline: 1-800-263-2266 (www.teljeunes.com)

Parents' Helpline: 1-800-361-5085 (www.parenthelpline.ca)

Missing Children's Network: They'll help you find kids who have run away or disappeared. 514-843-4333 (www.enfant-retourquebec.ca)

Drug Addiction help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.drogue-aidereference.qc.ca)

Gambling Addiction help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

The War Amps

The Legacy Continues

The War Amps continues to serve war amputees, and all Canadian amputees, including children. The Child Amputee (CHAMP) Program provides financial assistance for artificial limbs, regional seminars, and much more.

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customerservice@waramps.ca
waramps.ca

YouTube

Charitable Registration No. 13196 9628 RR0001
The War Amps does not receive government grants.

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence: 1-800-363-9010 (www.sosviolenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality Resources Center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) (www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688 (www.nwsm.info)

Suicide Action Québec: 1-866-277-3553 (www.suicide-quebec.net)

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources

Concordia University, Montreal:

The Centre for Native Education has changed its name to the Aboriginal Student Resource Centre (ASRC). The new name is inclusive of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis students the centre serves and recognizes its role as a resource for the Concordia community. For any further details contact: aboriginalcentre@concordia.ca or 514-848-2424 ext. 7327.

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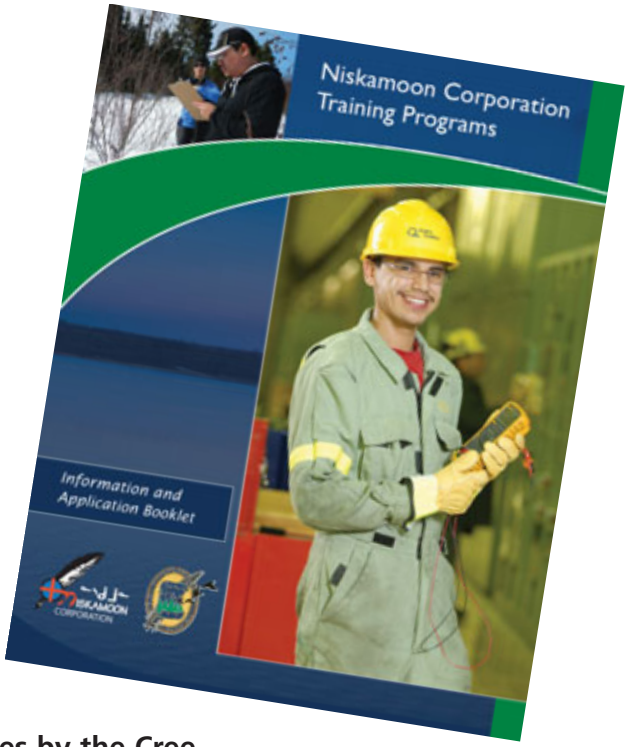
- Electronics Technology in Telecommunications/Computers, Gatineau

Additional Programs

(DEC), 3 year-programs

- Civil Engineering Technology, Rouyn
- Natural Environment Technology (NET), Chibougamau



Financial Assistance is provided to eligible beneficiaries by the Cree School Board Post Secondary Student Services. You may apply online at www.csbpostsecondary.ca and call 1-800-463-7402 for assistance.

For more information

The applications may be obtained through your Niskamoon Local Community Coordinator. You may call Andrea Kitchen at 1-877-441-1101 or email andrea.kitchen@cscree.qc.ca for assistance or questions regarding the application process and to obtain additional information regarding the programs.

www.niskamoon.org